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ABSTRACT

Almost seventy years passed before vocational education was recognized in 1977 as a state function in North Carolina's public secondary schools, community colleges/technical institutes, and teacher education programs. Although the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act initiated vocational education, North Carolina education was primarily a local matter until the 1930s. In 1933, during the depression, laws were passed giving the state public education responsibilities. The state lacked an overall vocational education policy; programs were essentially "federal programs". Events, such as the 1937 George-Deen Act, the 1946 George-Barden Act, and establishment in 1950 of Industrial Education Centers, helped change the status quo. Significantly, in 1963 the federal Vocational Education Act and the State Community College Act were passed. The federal act encouraged the state to develop a vocational education policy. As a funding prerequisite, the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments required a state advisory council. In 1976 the council recommended a state program with federal assistance. In the same year the federal Vocational Education Act was passed. In 1977 the state passed a State Vocational Education Law including vocational education as an integral part of the educational process to be administered by the state board of vocational education. The board of governors also recognized vocational education's importance in their long range (1977-82) plans. (CSS)

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THE NORTH CAROLINA STORY

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THE NORTH CAROLINA STORY

by E. Michael Latta

The year 1977 may well be remembered as the real beginning for vocational education in North Carolina. It was in that year a State law was enacted which declared: "It is the intent of the General Assembly that vocational education be an integral part of the educational process,"[1] and 'the State Board of Education shall be the sole State agency for the State administration of vocational education at all levels, shall be designated as the State Board of Vocational Education...."[2] Also, in 1977 the Board of Governors of the University System formally recognized vocational teacher education as a specific function of the public university system.

Why has it taken so long for vocational education to be legally recognized as "an integral part of the education process"? What events helped facilitate the aforementioned actions? In responding, the terms "occupational education" and "technical education" are sometimes used. They are synonymous with the term "vocational education."*

Brief History

Prior to the 1930's, education in North Carolina was primarily a local matter. That is, it was locally controlled, financed, and operated.

Vocational education, however, came into the education picture not by local initiative but by federal initiative--the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. The Act provided for cooperating with the State "...in paying the salaries of teachers, supervisors, and directors of agricultural subjects, and teachers

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*Vocational Education is defined as organized educational programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree.[3]

of trade, home economics, and industrial subjects, and the preparation of teachers of agriculture, trade, industrial, and home economics subjects...."[4] For each dollar of federal money expended for salaries, the State or local community, or both, had to expend at least an equal amount, with the same principle being applied for the preparation of vocational education teachers. Thereby, vocational education in the public secondary schools and in teacher education institutions was directed and nurtured by the federal government.

In 1933, at the height of the Great Economic Depression, the General Assembly passed laws by which the State took over the function of public education. Provisions included minimum financial support for all basic education programs but not for vocational education. The practice of matching federal vocational education funds to carry on vocational programs was continued. In other words, vocational education continued to be operated as a "federal" program. Even after the State began to overmatch federal dollars for vocational education by as much as six to one, vocational education programs and activities were operated primarily under federal law and regulations because the State lacked an overall policy on vocational education.

Key Events

Events of the mid-1930's, '40's, and '50's began to change the status quo. Additional federal laws were passed which affected Vocational Education. For example, the George-Deen Act of 1937 provided funds for distributive education, and more funds for vocational teacher education; the George-Barden Act of 1946 permitted more flexibility in the use of federal vocational education funds. At State initiative after 1957, several Industrial Education Centers (IECs) were established. While IECs were established as a part of the public school system, they were different. An IEC's primary mission was to offer vocational education

to high school students during the daytime with adults being trained or retrained during the evening.

In 1963 two significant laws were passed, one federal (Vocational Education Act) and one State (Community College Act). First, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 was significant because it suggested a different federal role in regard to vocational education than had been prescribed in the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and subsequently by other Vocational Education Acts up to 1963. Essentially, the new Vocational Education Act of 1963 encouraged the State to begin to develop its own policy for vocational Education. But no such overall State-level policy for vocational education was developed.

Secondly, a new State Law (Chapter 115-A) was enacted which created the Community College System. The basic concepts developed by IECs during the period of 1957 to 1963 were the keystone for this new system of education. The Community College Act is very direct: "The major purpose of each and every institution...shall be and shall continue to be the offering of vocational and technical education and training..."[5] for adults. The Act established the State's policy and basic State financial support for vocational and technical education offered for adults through the institutions which make up the Community College System. The law charged the State Board of Education with establishing and operating the Community College System.

The State Board of Education was still charged to "supervise and administer the free public school system"[6] of the State, as required by the State Constitution and State Law (Chapter 115). These dramatic changes in federal and state laws of 1963 had very limited impact on the operations of the public school vocational education programs or on the vocational teacher education efforts in the higher education system.

By 1968, the growth of vocational education programs in the public secondary schools, the continuing increasing overmatching of federal funds with State and local funds, and the continuing growth of the Community College System began to raise an educational issue: "What is the State's policy in regard to vocational education, especially at the public school level?" That question was not to be answered to any major extent for almost ten years, in 1977. The Governor's 1968 Study Commission on the Public School System of North Carolina did issue the following: "It is recommended that a unified State policy for occupational education be developed cooperatively by the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and the State Board of Higher Education."[7] As far as can be ascertained, however, this recommendation was never seriously considered by any of them. The State Board of Higher Education was, at that time, the coordinating body for all of higher education of the State. It was not until 1972 that all of the public colleges and universities were brought under the overall direction of a Board of Governors, which had broad powers and duties assigned to it by Chapter 116 of the General Statutes. One provision states:

> "The Board of Governors shall plan and develop a coordinated system of higher education in North Carolina. To this end, it shall govern the 16 constituent institutions,...and to this end it shall maintain close liaison with the State Board of Education, the Department of Community Colleges and the private colleges and universities of the State. The Board, in consultation with representatives of the State Board of Education and of the private colleges and universities, shall prepare and from time to time revise a long-range plan for a coordinated system of higher education...."[8]

In 1968 the federal Vocational Education Act was amended. Again, as federal vocational education legislation had directed as far back as 1917, the State Board of Education was to develop a State Plan for Vocational Education. For the State Board of Education's Department of Community Colleges, developing its part of the State Plan for Vocational Education was a relatively simple task

because the Community College System had a clear mission with financial support in State law. For the Department of Public Instruction, the other program agency of the State Board of Education, developing its part of the State Plan for Vocational Education became an increasingly complex task for at least the following reasons: (1) there was a very weak legal base in the State statutes on public secondary school vocational education; (2) the State Board of Education lacked consensus as to the purposes of vocational education for public secondary schools; (3) there was a long history (almost 60 years at that time) of operating vocational education programs the "federal way" in the public secondary schools; and (4) there was the federal Vocational Education Act of 1968, which "targeted" federal funds and required matching dollars for very specific purposes and activities.

A new and unique provision of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 was the requirement of a State Advisory Council on Vocational Education if the State was to receive federal vocational education funds. One of the Advisory Council's mandated duties was to publish an Annual Report, including appropriate recommendations for State Board of Education consideration.

Through 1975, the Advisory Council made seventy-five (75) recommendations to the State Board of Education, representing twenty-seven (27) major areas concerning vocational education. By 1976, it became clear to the Advisory Council that their recommendations had had limited results. Thereby, the Advisory Council called on the State Board for a Statewide Vocational Education Policy. In essence, the Advisory Council recommended a "State Program" with federal assistance, rather than the reverse, for all of the citizens who could use or benefit from Vocational Education. The Advisory Council urged the State Board of Education to seek the full cooperation of <u>at least</u> the Board of Governors and the State Manpower Services Council (SMSC) in developing such a

policy. The SMSC is charged by State and federal law to advise the Governor on goals, objectives, and policies regarding employment, training, and related programming, including the use of CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) funds.

During this same approximate time period (1976), several other related events were unfolding: the federal Vocational Education Act of 1976 was being finalized; the "Renfrow Commission" was reviewing and rewriting the State's Public School Laws; a "Blue Ribbon" Commission's Report on the goals for the Community Colleges was being considered; and the Board of Governors published its first Long Range Plan, 1976-1981 which projected an evaluation of the "Quality of Teacher Education Programs through the University of North Carolina System." As important as all of these, a Governor was elected who had stated:

> "Finally, it is now time to provide an expanded legal basis for comprehensive occupational education in the secondary schools of North Carolina. Our General Statutes do not prescribe a comprehensive state policy on occupational education. We need legislation that includes a declaration of purpose that sets basic standards for occupational education programs, that requires appropriate program evaluation and that sets guidelines for cooperation efforts between secondary schools and community colleges."[9]

Current Actions

As the General Assembly of 1977 began to consider legislation, a bill was introduced on Vocational Education. It was introduced in the House by Representative A. Hartwell Campbell from Wilson County and in the Senate by Senator Edward Renfrow (Chairman of the "Renfrow Commission") from Johnston County.

The bill became law on June 8, 1977. Several key features of the new State Vocational Education Law are: (1) the State Board of Education is to be the State Board of Vocational Education, and it is to be the sole state agency for the State administration of vocational education at all levels; (2) the

State Board is to administer a comprehensive program of vocational education, which shall be available to all students who desire it in the public secondary schools of the State; (3) the State Board is to describe the State's policy for Vocational Education and the system utilized for the delivery of Vocational Education programs, services, and activities; (4) the State Board is to make sure that articulation occurs with institutions, agencies, councils, and other organizations having responsibility for manpower development; and (5) the State Board is to prepare a Master Plan for Vocational Education which is to be updated periodically.

These provisions gave the State Board of Education the necessary legal authority to bring vocational education into the education mainstream. Still missing, however, was a way to bridge the public schools, the community colleges and the technical institutes together with the University System.

The 1976 Annual Report of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education had noted that while the Long Range Plan, 1976-1981 of the Board of Governors recognized an imbalance between the market demand for teachers and the kind of training and services being carried on by constituent institutions in the University System, little mention could be found for meeting the needs of vocational and technical teachers who were needed to teach and work in the public secondary schools and community colleges and technical institutes. In November, 1977, the Board of Governors took a major step forward in correcting this oversight when it adopted a statement on Vocational Education in its updated Long Range Plan, 1977-1982. The statement reads in part:

> "Occupational education comprises an important aspect of North Carolina's public education program. It is also an important component of federal policy.
>
> "In the 'Vocational Education State Plan,' the State Board of Education notes the necessity for University contributions to an effective program of occupational education.

> In particular, it is pointed out that the University institutions have major responsibilities in providing needed programs in such areas as health occupations and in the teaching of the disadvantaged and handicapped, and in preparing--through pre-service and in-service programs--teachers; counsellors; supervisors; and other school personnel.
>
> "As planning in this area [Vocational Education] proceeds, the Board of Governors will continue to cooperate with and seek the advice of the State Board of Education in determining how University contributions can most effectively be made."[10]

Also, the Board of Governors' Long Range Plan, 1977-1982 contained the key findings of the "Quality of Teacher Education Study." One reference stated:

> "The study clearly indicated no basis for further expansion of teacher education programs in the university at this time or for the foreseeable future. Some specific areas of high demand do remain (e.g., reading education, special education, vocational education...) and institutions were advised to reallocate their resources to expand productivity in these areas while decreasing productivity of areas of oversupply."[11] (emphasis added)

Vocational education had come of age. For the first time the major leadership forces were speaking in one accord; namely, the U. S. Congress, the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors. One of the recommendations of the 1968 Governor's Study Commission and the recommendation of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education in 1976 was being fully developed for appropriate implementation.

Summary

Vocational Education is now formally recognized as a "State function" in our public secondary schools, community colleges and technical institutes, and in teacher education programs in the State's University System. It had taken almost seventy years to be so recognized.

What does the future hold for this component of our educational enterprise? Only time will tell. But if the year 1977 is to be a model, then the years ahead appear to be bright for vocational education.

FOOTNOTES

1. N. C. Session Laws, 1977, Ch. 490, Article 27A, section 115-229.1 (HB 492).

2. Ibid., section 115-229.3.

3. "Education Amendments of 1976," Public 94-482, as amended, Title II, Sec. 195(1).

4. "Vocational Education Act of 1917 (Smith-Hughes Act)," Public Law 64-347, Sec. 1.

5. N. C. Public School Laws, Chapter 115A-1.

6. Constitution of North Carolina, Article IX, Sec. 5.

7. Occupational Education for the Public Schools of North Carolina, Supplementary Report of the Governor's Study Commission on the Public School System of North Carolina, 1968, p. 6.

8. North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 116-11(1).

9. "Public Schools and the Community: Strengthening Quality Education in the 1970's," A Position Statement by Jim Hunt, July 10, 1976, p. 6.

10. Board of Governors, University of North Carolina, Long-Range Planning, 1977-1982, pp. 283-284.

11. Ibid., pp. 252-253.

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E. Michael Latta was born and reared in rural North Carolina. A product of a public high school, he attended a private junior college, Wingate; a public university, Appalachian; and an internationally known graduate school, Duke University, where he earned the A.A., B.S., M.A., and Ed.D. Degrees, respectively.

He has served in a variety of roles at the public school, community college, university, State and national levels of government. In 1970-71, he was an Office of Education Fellow. For the last three years, he has served as the Executive Director of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education in North Carolina.

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